

IN THE APPLICATION
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FOR A
COLLECTIBLE AND METHOD OF MAKING THE SAME

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/434,430, filed December 19, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a collectible and a method of making the same, and more particularly to a mass-produced, low-cost, keepsake collectible, which may be made substantially from towels or the like and may have a bean bag core.

2. DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

Aboard a cruise ship, a guest may return to his or her room to find a small animal perched on their bed made from simple hand towels. Behind the scenes, a cabin steward or housekeeping staff member has folded a towel or towels by hand to create the likeness of the animal. For the passenger, these novelties are often a welcome and memorable part of the cruise experience, for adults as well as children.

Unfortunately, the conventional novelties are time-consuming to make and thus expensive, in terms of labor costs, for a cruise ship operator. Also, since the novelties are merely folded pieces of cloth, they are temporary in nature. Thus, the passenger or guest cannot realistically take the novelty home as a keepsake in order to remember the cruise. Even if they did, the novelty would not retain its shape over a long period of time. Further, the cruise ship operator does not wish to encourage the taking of towels, in the first place. Novelty towels and napkins may also be found in hotels or restaurants, aboard trains or planes, and in other hospitality and travel businesses.

There is a need for a mass-produced, low-cost novelty that can be taken home as a keepsake and which would be a replacement for the high-cost, temporary novelty of the prior art. A variety of U.S. Patents disclose towels and toys; however, none are directed to a collectible and method of making a collectible which solves the aforementioned problems.

U.S. Patent No. 3,082,437, issued March 26, 1963 to S. Upthagrove, describes a novelty beach mat. U.S. Patent No. 4,224,712, issued September 30, 1980 to Black et al., describes a towel and method. U.S. Design Patent No. 364,004, issued November 7, 1995 to Ederle, describes a wash cloth for infants. U.S. Patent No. 5,664,258, issued September 9, 1997 to Harris, describes an animal/fowl caricature-like towel parka.

U.S. Design Patent No. 401,020, issued November 10, 1998 to Barlow, describes an oven pan pad. U.S. Design Patent No. 409,036, issued May 4, 1999 to Bear, describes an ornamental child's pillow in the fanciful form of a turtle. U.S. Patent No. 6,108,855, issued August 29, 2000 to DeLeon, describes a hand towel. Japanese Patent No. 2001-340254, issued December 11, 2001 to Hiroataka, describes a mascot shaped hand towel.

None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to describe the instant invention as claimed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a collectible with a core, a filler material, a fabric surface layer, and a fabric attachment. The core, which may be a bean bag, is provided inside the fabric surface layer and the fabric surface layer is stuffed with the filler material to form a body. The fabric attachment is attached to the body to form a body part shape. The collectible has an overall shape, which is substantially like the animals created by the steward or housekeeping staff. The fabric surface layer and the fabric attachment may be towels or the like. The collectible may be a mass-produced, low-cost, keepsake collectible.

The present invention is also directed to a method of making a collectible. The method includes a sizing step, a placing step, a stuffing step, and an attaching step. In the sizing step, a core, a fabric surface layer, a filler material, and a fabric attachment are sized such that the collectible is adapted to have an overall shape, which is substantially like an animal. In the placing step, the core is placed inside the fabric surface layer. In the stuffing step, the fabric surface layer is stuffed with the filler material to form a body. In the attaching step, the fabric attachment is attached to the body to form a body part shape. The method may be adapted to mass-produce a low-cost, keepsake collectible.

Accordingly, it is a principal object of the invention to provide a collectible with a core, a filler material, a fabric surface layer, and a fabric attachment.

It is another object of the invention to provide a method of making a collectible including a sizing step, a placing step, a stuffing step, and an attaching step.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a collectible with a core, a filler material, a fabric surface layer, and a fabric attachment, where the fabric surface layer and the fabric attachment are made from towels.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a collectible with a beanbag core, a filler material, a fabric surface layer, and a fabric attachment.

It is an object of the invention to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof in an apparatus for the purposes described which is inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

5 These and other objects of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 Fig. 1 is an environmental, perspective side view of a collectible according to the present invention with a cutaway view of the core, the filler material, and the fabric surface layer.

15 Fig. 2 is an environmental, perspective view of a collectible in the fanciful form of a frog.

 Fig. 3 is an environmental, perspective view of a collectible in the fanciful form of a pig.

 Fig. 4 is an environmental, perspective view of a collectible in the fanciful form of an elephant.

20 Fig. 5 is an environmental, perspective view of a collectible in the fanciful form of a hippopotamus.

 Fig. 6 is an environmental, perspective view of a collectible in the fanciful form of a swan.

 Fig. 7 is a diagram of a method of making a collectible.

Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

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The present invention is directed to a collectible 10 and a method 100 of making the same. The present invention is particularly directed to a mass-produced, low-cost, keepsake collectible which is a substitute for the hand-made, high-cost, temporary novelties, noted above. The collectible 10 may be made substantially from towels or the like.

As shown in Fig. 1, the collectible 10 comprises a core 20, a filler material 30, a fabric surface layer 40, and a fabric attachment 50. The collectible 10 has an overall shape which is substantially that of an animal. The overall shape refers to the fact that the collectible 10 is assembled in a manner such that is not temporary and is intended to keep its shape.

As illustrated herein, the overall shape of the collectible 10 may approximate that of a frog (Fig. 2), a pig (Fig. 3), an elephant (Fig. 4), a hippopotamus (Fig. 5), or a swan (Fig. 6). However, the overall shape of the collectible 10 may be substantially that of any animal (i.e. dog, monkey, tiger, etc.). The overall shape of the collectible 10 desirably contains

sufficient characteristics to form an attractive approximation of the animal being depicted.

The core 20 is provided inside the fabric surface layer 40 and the fabric surface layer 40 is stuffed with the filler material 30 to form a body 35. The core 20 may be any suitable core material which provides the collectible 10 with sufficient weight which is desirable for collectibles, particularly collectibles which are meant to be handled and may be used as a toy. The core 20 may, desirably, be a beanbag or the like. Also, the core 20 may be positioned inside the collectible 10 in a manner such that the collectible 10 is adapted to sit upright. The position of the core 20 in the collectible 10 may be adapted to suit the particular character being constructed.

The filler material 30 may be any suitable material for stuffing the collectible 10. The filler material 30 may be cotton, polyester, beans, sawdust, feathers, and the like. A sponge-like material may also be used as filler, which will allow the collectible to be used in water as, for example, a bath sponge.

The fabric surface layer 40 and the fabric attachment 50 may be made from any suitable material for holding the filler material 30 and maintaining the overall shape of the collectible 10. The fabric surface layer 40 and the fabric attachment 50 may desirably be made from cloth and may be in the form of one or more napkins or

towels. Preferably, cotton towels, and even more preferably, 100% cotton terry cloth towels may be used for the fabric surface layer 40 and the fabric attachment 50 of the collectible 10. Also, the fabric surface layer 40 may be made from several pieces, which are stitched together to form the overall shape of the collectible 10.

When the collectible 10 of the present invention is made with towels, the collectible 10 evokes the look and feel of the hand-made, high-cost, temporary novelty, noted above. Although, it is preferable that the towels be white, any color may be used, for example, a green towel for a frog collectible 10.

The fabric attachment 50 is attached to the body 35 to form a body part shape. The fabric attachment 50 may be attached using any suitable means for the attachment of fabric, such as a stitched seam 60, which may be visible or hidden. The body part shape may have the approximate form of, for example, an arm or leg shape 50 (Figs. 1-5), an ear shape 55 (Figs. 3-5), a wing shape 90 (Fig. 6), or a neck and head shape 92 (Fig. 6) of an animal. Other body part shapes may be made, as appropriate.

The collectible 10 may further comprise a sewn-in animal feature 70. The sewn-in animal feature 70 may be, for example, an approximation of a mouth shape (Fig. 1) or a snout shape (Fig. 3). Other animal features may be made, as appropriate. Any color or

type of thread may be used for the sewn-in animal feature 70. It may be desirable to match the color of the thread to the color of the towel or to use clear thread, such as nylon.

5 The collectible 10 may further comprise an embroidered animal feature 80. The embroidered animal features 80 may be, for example, an eye shape (Figs. 1-6) or a nostril shape (Fig. 3). Other animal features may be made, as appropriate. Any color or type of thread may be used for the embroidering.

10 The collectible 10 may further comprise a plastic support piece 94. For example, in forming the swan (Fig. 6), the plastic support piece 94 is provided inside the collectible 10 to support the neck shape 92 of the collectible 10.

15 The collectible 10 may have an overall length L, which is less than 12". Preferably, the collectible 10 has an overall length L of between 6" and 12". Even more preferably, the overall length L of the collectible 10 is about 9". The present inventor has found that these overall lengths are desirable in the marketplace, particularly in the collectibles marketplace.

20 As noted above, the present invention is also directed to a method 100 of making a collectible 10. The method 100 may be a mass production method. As shown in Fig. 7, the method 100 comprises a sizing step 110 where the core 20, the fabric surface

layer 40, the filler material 30, and the fabric attachment 50 are sized such that the collectible 10 is adapted to have an overall shape which is substantially that of an animal, as noted above. The sizing step 110 may be performed by hand or machine.

5 The method 100 also comprises a placing step 120 wherein the core 20 is placed inside the fabric surface layer 40, a stuffing step 130 wherein the fabric surface layer 40 is stuffed with the filler material 30 to form a body 35, and an attaching step 140 wherein the fabric attachment 50 is attached to the body 35 to form
10 the body part shape 50, 55, 90, 92, all of which may be performed by hand or with suitable equipment for placing, stuffing, and attaching.

 Although the steps of the method 100 are presented and shown in a particular order, the steps may be performed in any order that
15 is suitable for making the collectible 10 of the present invention.

 The method 100 may further comprise a rolling step 150 wherein the fabric attachment 50 is formed by rolling a towel. For example, the arm or leg shape 50 (Figs. 1-5) or the neck and head shape 92 is formed using a rolling technique by hand or machine.

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The method 100 may further comprise a folding step 160 wherein the fabric attachment 50 is formed by folding a towel. For example, the ear 55 (Figs. 3-5) of the collectible 10 is formed using a folding technique by hand or machine.

5 The method 100 may further comprise an embroidering step 170 wherein the embroidered animal feature 80 is embroidered by hand or machine into the fabric surface layer 40.

10 The method 100 may further comprise a sewing step 180 wherein the sewn-in animal feature 70 is sewn by hand or machine into the fabric surface layer 40.

 The method 100 may further comprise an inserting step 190 wherein a plastic support piece 94 is inserted by hand or machine inside the collectible 10.

15 Due to the inexpensive materials and manufacturing methods of the present invention, the collectible 10 of the present invention may be adapted for mass production according to the method 100 of the present invention. The mass production may be by hand or machine. The present inventor has found that the collectible 10 made according to the method 100 of the present invention may be
20 sold for a significant profit per unit.

 It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the sole embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.